



BILL FINCH  
Mayor

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TESTIMONY OF THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
TO THE  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2009

RE: HB 5538 AN ACT ELIMINATING THE PROPERTY STORAGE MANDATE ON TOWNS REGARDING THE DISPOSITION AND STORAGE OF POSSESSIONS AND PERSONAL EFFECTS OF EVICTED TENANTS.

The City of Bridgeport urges your support to SB: An Act Concerning Storage of Personal Items of Evicted Tenants.

The City of Bridgeport supports this committee's effort to reform the eviction process. The previous mandate allows for the immediate removal of personal effects, with 24-hour notification to the municipality, to be set out on the adjacent sidewalk, street or highway. The mandate does not take into account the cost, weather conditions and the chaos created on the public streets, nor does it compensate municipalities to comply with this mandate.

The City of Bridgeport used to average approximately two evictions per day; however, the foreclosure crisis has doubled the eviction mandate cost. We now average approximately four evictions per day, 4.5 days per week, 52 weeks per year (except holidays). We are on pace to do approximately 900 evictions this fiscal year. The pace started accelerating significantly about two years ago. We really have been averaging four evictions per week for about a year. The City of Bridgeport does not have a separate eviction budget and we usually budget \$105,897 for evictions.

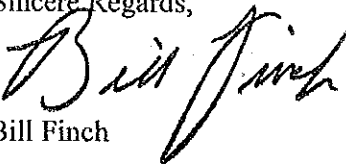
The eviction mandate compels our city to utilize two full-time city employees, but recently due to the increase in volume, we have been forced to dedicate three additional employees to ensure that we are complying with this state mandate. Counting benefits, fuel, vehicle maintenance, and disposal cost/tipping fees, this mandate is currently costing the City of Bridgeport \$161,078 annually.

The City of Bridgeport would not advocate reforms that would allow the municipality to charge the property owner to recover lost costs as these residents are already experiencing severe financial hardship. The property owner, a local taxpayer, has already lost up to six months to a year in rent and should not be required to pay any additional costs for removal of a tenant.

The City of Bridgeport does support immediate disposal of the personal property of the tenant if deemed a health risk by the local health department. Tenants' personal belongings removed by the City of Bridgeport are frequently in deteriorating condition, unable to be sold on the open market. By requiring the municipality to hold these belongings for a 15-day period, you are essentially increasing the cost of the eviction to the city. The city must retrieve the belongings; transport them to storage, then transport them to the transfer station for disposal after the 15 day period. When necessary, if the local health department can examine the items and determine they are a health risk, the city dispose of them instantly and save on transportation costs.

I stand ready to work with this committee on language regarding this matter, and I thank you for addressing this issue and for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony on this important reform.

Sincere Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Finch". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "B" and a cursive "Finch".

Bill Finch

Mayor